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.A77 V4
1912
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VERSES

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IF I could bring rare gifts today
That you would greatly prize,
Why then you need not turn away,
Nor I apologize.

But, on my reedy pipes, like Pan,
I fancied I could flute;
Perhaps it were the better plan
To be discreetly mute.

And yet I bring my gift to you,
A book of humble verse—
It is the best that I can do,
Perhaps few could do worse.

The Night Before Christmas.

DECEMBER skies of purple night,
That held the promised star of old,
Ye have not lost your ancient right
To mysteries manifold.

To those of earth who come and kneel,
With that same faith the Wise Men knew,
To those of us who pray, reveal
The starlit paths we should pursue.

It is not that we are less keen
To reach the Goal, to win the Prize;
But, that the Way is dimlier seen,
And men have grown less wise.

A Valentine

(To a boy of half-past three.)

WHERE shy birds sing and lazy bees
Above the clover hum;
Where soft winds sigh through budding trees,
From Georgia, Sir, I come.

I came a route where mile on mile
The sombre pines are seen,
From where the green-clad valleys smile
The old red hills between.

From where wild violets lift their eyes
Awhile to gaze at you,
And from old Georgia's arching skies
They take their heavenly hue.

From where the Chattahoochee sings
Of mountains to the plain,
From where the broad Savannah brings
Her tributes to the main.

From where the live-oaks line our shores
And yellow jasmines twine,
An ancient sweetheart, Sir, of yours,
Brings you this Valentine.

A Love Song.

SWEETHEART, have I been sleeping,
Or did winter come and go?
Of time no record keeping,
Is it strange I do not know?
Not asleep perhaps, but dreaming
Such dreams as gods bestow,
Because, sweetheart, you love me—
Though you have not told me so.

Every flower leaning nearer,
More fragrant seems to grow;
Every whispered secret dearer,
That the breezes murmur low.
The very skies seem clearer,
Though why, I do not know,
Unless because you love me—
Though you have not told me so.

My burdens have grown lighter,
As burdens seldom grow,
And I think the world looks brighter
Than it did a while ago;
Some joys are not above me,
Some trials, far below,
Because, sweetheart, you love me—
Though you have not told me so.

Declining an Invitation.

STAY with you, green leaves and grasses,
Stay with you, flowers and trees?
In the sunshine and shadow that passes,
In sound of the birds and the bees?

Stay with you, woodbine and jasmine,
Bubbling cool streams where you sing?
Stay with you all through the summer,
From this the beginning of spring?

Here where the pine trees are waving,
Where the grey moss festoons the low boughs?
Where the jays in the distance are calling,
And the doves are repeating their vows?

Stay with you, Ah! how I long to,
In the warmth of the South and the sun.
But then, don't you know, 't would be wrong to
Turn back from a journey begun.

My Lesson.

THIS thorn, my Father, it is placed
Just where my strength seems vain to reach;
Perhaps, my Father, I in haste
Have missed the lesson it should teach.

Is it Thy will that I should feel
The pressure of it day by day,
Because without I would not kneel,
But for this thorn I would not pray?

But for the pressure of this pain,
That daily, hourly humbles so,
I would not seek Thy face again,
Thy gracious kindness never know?

Thy depth of mercy fathom not,
Nor Thy forgiveness ever prove,
The discipline of pain forgot
Would I need stronger cords than love?

Thy will, my Father, then, not mine,
Thou knowest what is best for me.
The strength my weakness would decline
Is just a gracious gift from Thee.

In August.

SO long withheld, like tears denied to pain,
Come soul-refreshing showers—the summer rain.
Dry thirsty fields and meadows daisy-kissed,
Hot dusty lengthening roads our feet resist,
Still glassy pools, unrippled by a breath,
And tall bent stalks of grain quite done to death,
Round ripened thistle heads soft yet with down,
In lack of breeze to bear away a crown,
Wilted trailing things exhausted by the heat
And the hot hearts of trees that could not beat.—
Thus all Nature seemed to lie in deep despair
'Till limp leaves (suppliant hands upheld in prayer)
Begin to quiver with the answering breeze.
Then big slow drops of rain strike through the trees,
And like the pulse of pain, at last subdued,
So calms the steady rain, the summer's mood.

On Receiving a Copy of the "Riley Love Lyrics."

THE love songs of Youth! I can hear the
birds sing,
I can see the blue sky, smell the flowers of
spring.
The winds whisper low and the shadows of
trees
Fall cool on the grass, and there's droning of
bees
Over pink heads of clover, that bend where
they light—
While the Riley Love Lyrics grow dim to my
sight.
But out of the dimness that moistens my eyes,
From the mists and the shadows strange
visions arise
Of cool shady paths that are reaching away
Across the June fields of a far Yesterday—
Dreamily reaching and stretching across
A tangle of rushes, the velvet of moss,
Smooth surface of stones where bare feet
might press,
Long frail fronded ferns that clasp to caress.

The flowing of water invisible, near,
Spills out its low laughter enchanting the ear,
And I follow it gladly, and follow it far
Away into the distance where Life's Lost Loves are.
Lands of unfulfilled promise and hopes long deferred,
Of faiths unrequited, where partings occurred
From the friends of Lang Syne, whom we long most to see—
And the Riley Love Lyrics recall these to me.

Morning-Glories.

MORNING-GLORIES! Don't you know
How they always love to grow?—
Climbing the fences, peeping through,
Rimmed with the rainbow drops of dew,
Dipped in the rarest, deepest dyes
Caught from the sky on a late sunrise,
White and purple and pink and blue,
(And I remember the striped ones, too,)
Down in the ditches and up in the trees,
Hundreds nodding on every breeze,
Twining around the dead cornstalks,
Trailing along the garden walks,
Trying to hide with their own sweet grace,
This rough old earth, with its bare hard face!

If.

IF springtime blossoms still might strew
The woodland paths before us;
If as of old the branches threw
Their loving shadows o'er us;

If Georgia skies bent tenderly
Their canopy of blue,
Not only over me today,
But also over you;

If dear Dame Nature shared alike
With you and me her smile,
Then Spring had wrought a miracle
That I might deem worth while.

A Fancy.

WHEN Evening's dewy fingers
Close the violets' azure eyes,
And a golden glory lingers
In the far-off sunset skies;

I fancy that the City
With the streets of beaten gold
Must lie within that region
Where the sunset clouds unfold.

'Tis there beyond the limit
Of that hill with snowy crest,
That the "wicked cease from troubling,
And the weary are at rest."

There stands the stately palace
With its pearly gates ajar,
To welcome weary pilgrims
Who have seen it from afar.

I can almost hear the music
Of the anthems, as they rise
To the olden, golden glory,
Of the summer sunset skies.

And there the shoreless waters
Their crystal tributes bring,
Making glad with ceaseless music
The City of the King.

Thanksgiving.

THANKSGIVING ! Dear, I'm thankful truly,
For all the songs the sweet birds sing;
Thankful for frost, for flowers; duly
Thankful for Autumn and for Spring.

Thankful for toil, for time, for season;
Thankful for skies serenely blue;
For all of these and, with far more reason,
Most thankful of all for you!

Messengers.

IF down from all the leafless trees'
Bare boughs against the blue,
A flight of merry songsters
Could gaily follow you,
And carol forth your praises,
Wish you good luck and health,
And a "Bon voyage" and happiness,
Success, long life and wealth;
Then I need not remind him
To write to you; you see
The birds would be the messengers
And pipe right cheerily.

Understood.

NOT "homesick for the mountains;"
I am longing for the plain,
For the miracle of sunrise
Over rippling fields of grain.

My lids are tired of lifting,
My feet refuse to climb;
I long for the level lowlands
Though your hills may be sublime,

For the sweetbay's graceful leaning,
Where the marsh grass groweth high,
For the weird and mystic meaning
Of the tall pine's quivering sigh.

I am lonely for the music
Of the seaward flowing streams,
That bore upon their bosoms
A fleet of youthful dreams;

For the ring-dove's soft complaining
In her cloister remote,
For the heated noonday's waning,
Where the twilight shadows float.

I need the grey veil of mosses,
Hushed aisles of ancient oak,
With the soft cathedral music
That the mocking-birds evoke.

I dream of the tangled passes,
Of the privacy of dells,
Where the Southern jasmine masses
Her myriad golden bells;

Of the ferns and their prayerful pleading
With their fronded palms in air;
And the cool baptismal fountains
That are gently filtering there.

I miss the wild wood violets,
The blue of their truthful eyes,
"The spell of an old enchantment",
Neath the arch of my Southern skies.

O, I miss the steady comradeship,
The peace of the level lands,
The calm of their benediction
On the soul that understands.

Again.

AGAIN the apple trees are flowered,
Again the thrushes sing,
Again the dawn is golden-houred,
And this, again, is Spring.

And earth is sweet with balmy airs,
And musical with song,
And we must lay aside our cares,
Or facing them, be strong.

For we must give back song for song,
And answer smile for smile;
For what to us has seemed so long,
Is but a little while.

A little while, a little way,
A little truth and trust,
Then all the unsaid things to say—
Spring violets and dust.

War With Spain.

TO arms! To arms! Again the call
Rings over Georgia hills;
From where her sparkling waters fall
Adown the inland rills,
To where the forest silence wakes
The echoes o'er and o'er,
And mournfully it throbs and breaks
Along her peaceful shore.

To arms! To arms! The blue skies bend
O'er valleys fair and free;
But with the whispering winds, there blend
The threatenings from the sea.
The muttering thunders low began,
But near and nearer draw.
O, power behind the rage of man
Avert the crime of war!

1898.

The Priest's Prayer.

"BACK to where the roses rest,"
Take me, other places tire;
Where I toiled I would find rest,
Rest is what I most desire.

Rest for body, rest for mind,
Calm without and peace within—
These are what I fain would find—
Rest from weariness and sin.

"Back to where the roses rest,"
Where I often strove in prayer;
Surely there, I will be blest,
There I know—if anywhere.

There by night and there by day,
I have seen them through my tears,
Seen their beauty fade away
Like my hopes and like my fears.

"Back to where the roses rest"—
Roses red and roses white—
How their beauty will suggest
Thoughts by day and dreams by night!

"Back to where the roses rest,"
Where all strife and discord cease,
Take me, for I know 'tis best.
"Roses, I would share your peace."

November Rains.

O, DULL November skies that weep
O'er fields where buried daises sleep;
Where are the summer days, the blue
Of violets, of skies we knew?

The tender green of young leaves, stirred
By vagrant note of truant bird?
The slow sweet music of the streams,
The happy Dreamer and the dreams?

New Year Greetings.

A HAPPY New Year! Blue the skies are bending
O'er brown fields and winter woods all bare;
And I at random round the wide world sending,
Wish you all happiness another year.

I know the sky that arches o'er you brightly,
Extends its canopy of blue, its sunny beams to me;
And those same stars that look down on me nightly,
Will smile a New Year's greeting soon, for thee.

And may sweet bells from cloud-kissed towers, ring you
A happy New Year, where they dream above;
And may the New Year bring, whatever else it brings you,
His first best gift of boundless love.

The Spirit of Giving.

IT is the thought, my Friend,
And not the price you paid.
How little we could send
If gold was weighed
Against the heart's warm beats
And Spirits true
That, through the lapse of years,
No changes knew!

And so today
We deeply doubt
That we have "paid our way"
Along the route
Marked out for us
By One, who lends
Such gracious gifts to us,
As you, my Friends.

Spring Song.

"AS long as there are violets
They shall have their place in song;"
And ah, may there be violets
As long as life is long!

Of all unforgotten fragrances,
And blossoms tear-bedewed,
Are violets, with vagrancies
For every human mood.

By every narrow bridle-path,
The woods their wealth disclose,
Where in primitive sweet innocence,
The blue wild violet grows.

But closer to the hearts of us,
In Life and Love and Death,
Dear modest English violets
Exhale their fragrant breath.

The dimmest paths of Memory,
Echoing sweetest strains of Song,
Are the haunts of early violets,
As long as life is long!

Rebekah at the Mirror.

"TO see ourselves as others see us,"
If you could do this, dear, I say,
Behold your winsome ways that free us
From grown-up thoughts of every day!

See your sweet eyes of youthful smiling,
Alight with dreams of things to be,
Know that your playful moods are whiling
Away dull cares and laughingly;

Suggesting to the staid beholder
The morning peaks of new desire,
That, while your loving arms enfold her,
She feels she must again aspire!

Yet, seeing, you could not guess the reason
We smile back at you when you smile,
For so do flowers bloom in season,
So birds with lilting songs beguile.

So dew-bejeweled mornings greet us,
When Spring down woodland's dim defile,
Lifts laughter-loving glance to meet us;
So earth seems fair and life worth while.

So it is that you, as I see you,
Can well inspire my every hour.
Old trees have only strength, it is true,
But feel stronger near a flower.

The Uncertainty.

IF I should send you a Valentine, Sweet,
How would you greet it this bleak winter's day?
Would you sit dreaming of green fields of wheat,
Where the sweet birds are singing the love songs of May?

Of blooms and of blossoms, the sunshine, the sky
That is bluer because of the love that it spans;
Of the breezes that whisper their thoughts and go by,
Of bees humming over their wonderful plans?

Of far away mountain tops, misty and blue,
Goal of young aspirations, of youth's rash desires,
With vistas of roadways that once led thereto,
Of the East and the Dawn and the Day-God's first fires?

If I should send it, (oh Valentine, take
A sudden adieu since you long to depart)
Out of the depths of your dreams, would it wake
A smile on your lips and a song in your heart?

Such a Request.

TELL you my thoughts? Ah, if I might!
Those thoughts come from I know not where,
With outstretched wings and homeward flight,
Like birds when the night draws near.

Some from the green June fields, that lie
Far to the South, where the soft winds woo
The sunbeams down from a storm-swept sky,—
And these are my thoughts of you.

Some from the midnight hills, that lean
Lonely and grand in their purple state,
With the twisting narrowing paths between,—
And these are my thoughts of Fate.

Some with the sunlight on their wings,
Caught from the glittering Gates of Day
Slowly closing on earthly things,—
And these are the thoughts I pray.

To His Mother.

THE best is past, but banish tears,
The skies o'er arch their blue;
The birds that sang for him through happy years,
Now sing for you.

The flowers that look up misted, sweet,
To eyes grown dim,
But make the present more replete
With thoughts of him.

The stars, that through the night their vigils keep
In yonder blue,
When half the weary world was wrapt in sleep,
He loved and knew.

And Spring, that comes again, nor fails
Of wonders manifold,
Now tells within your ears, the tales
To him she told.

You, who in quiet ways, must calmly wait
The Beckoning Hand,
Who do not understand the mysteries of Fate,
Will understand.

The Shores of Sleep.

DARLING, kiss my eyelids down,
Sleep refuses to abide.
All day's garish cares I'd drown
In the waves of Eventide.

Ah! the gentle ebb and flow
Of the waves that kiss and cling
To the Shores of Long Ago,
And the messages they bring!

Am I worthy to receive
Such rich treasures as they float
Upon the golden sands and leave
With a parting murmurous note?

Wreckage of the Blessed Isles—
Isles of Hope we used to know—
Leagues on leagues, and miles on miles,
O'er sapphire seas of endless flow.

Mysteries of foreign strands,
  Wonders of the briny deep,
Have no secrets like the lands
  Bordered by the seas of sleep;

And no music like the sound
  Of the waves that ebb and flow,
With their echoes, deep, profound,
  From the shores of Long Ago!

A Mother.

MY friends as we bend above her,
We may say, tho' sore distressed,
For the comfort of those who love her,
"It is only the wished-for rest."

Now never a throb of anguish,
Nor ever the pulse of pain;
And never a tear of sorrow
Need fall from her eyes again.

And never again a struggle,
Nor ever again a care;
And never, O heavy ladened,
The burden of life to bear!

Never, no never, O mother,
A tear for an absent child;
Nor ever to weep for another
Asleep where the daisies smiled.

And never the world-old trouble,
Nor ever a thorn for her feet;
Nor ever a word of parting
But only to wait, to greet.

With never a sob to grieve her,
Nor a sigh to break her rest;
We, who so loved may leave her,
Asleep on her Master's breast.

Dreaming.

I AM dreaming of the green fields and of the daisies white,
I am dreaming of spring violets that lean to kiss the light,
I am dreaming of the woods and streams and soft clear skies of blue;
But, Dearest, in my dreaming I am dreaming more of you.

The sweet birds sing about you, the soft winds sigh your name,—
Dear Heart, the world without you would doubt when springtime came.
The waters would not ripple at half their merry pace,
Nor any wild flower blossom in its accustomed place.

The winds have told my secret, the listening trees have heard,
The young leaves are aflutter at every whispered word.
I know I am not dreaming. I hear it early—late—
For a sweet bird softly sings it for a love-song to his mate.

HOW can I help you, Dear? Yes, I
Long for an untried way to try.

Long for the magic of word or touch
That will help you soonest and help you much.

How can I help you? Cares oppress
And the trouble is greater than I can guess.

The world is cold and the pathway rough,
And the might of my love is not enough.

How can I help you, Dear? I long
For the singer's gift and the sweetest song,

Blent babble of brook and wood note clear,
To sing to your soul a song of cheer.

The woman's right and the woman's way
To aid, is cheer and love: to stay

The faltering steps and the failing strength,
Since she cannot shorten the journey's length.

How can I help you? Just one way,
To point to the skies that are often gray

And tell you to trust in His love for you
Until by and by when the skies are blue.

Children.

THEY come to me from out the years
With eager artless faces,
With winsome smiles and April tears—
All childhood's nameless graces.

Across the daisied summer fields
At twilight's dewy sweetness,
And with gay Autumn's golden yields
They troop—my life's completeness.

Their voices mingle with the bells
Of early Sabbath mornings;
Such peace, such piëty compels
With Elfin psalms and warnings.

I rescue them from city streets,
Of unknown names and races,
Like flowers rifled of their sweets
In uncongenial places.

And then at night I fold away
  Their uniforms of daring,
And joyous garments of the day
  My children have been wearing;

While in the firelight's fitful gleam,
  Where late their faces smiled,
On Christmas Eve I sit and dream—
  Who have not any child.

If I May.

IT is my hope yet to toil with you side by side,
The burden of your daily life to share;
To see the vista of the dim years beautified,
To lift the future loneliness you fear.

It is my wish some daily sacrifice to make,
That I may walk the quiet ways with you;
To leave the dusty highway for its own unlovely sake,
And loiter where the green fields drink the dew.

Ah, could we not walk hand in hand among the wheat,
Together bind the Autumn's ripening sheaves?
Like one of old, I'd find my humble labor sweet,
To garner what the more ambitious reaper leaves.

Yes, tares there may be, Heart of Mine, and thorns,
And cruel stones to bruise the wayward feet;
But cool, refreshing twilights and the early dawns
To purify our souls,—and Work and Life complete.

Thanksgiving.

THANKSGIVING for the sunshine sweet,
That makes the whole world bright!
Thankful am I that thy dear feet
Walk in its ways of light.

Thanksgiving for the fields, the springs,
The arching skies of blue!
Thankful am I for all sweet things
That make life fair for you.

Thanksgiving for the flowers, dear heart,
That bloom about your way;
For joys in which I have no part,
That come to you today!

A Lenten Prayer.

IT is not gold that I sigh for,
Not the greed of gain today,
Not less of the rains of April,
Nor more of the blooms of May.

Sweet birds could not be blither,
Flowers more fair to see—
None of these things I sigh for,
They are around and over me.

The miracle of morning,
The lure of the distant hills,
The gain of the wide sweet open,
The rush of the laughing rills;

Pure, fresh air for the breathing,
Sapphire arch of the skies,
Gold, massed gold of the sunset,
Bequeathed as the sweet day dies;

Such wealth as would seem exhaustless,
Yet this is why I sighed,
That out of such boundless plenty,
Any should be denied.

Lord of this great abundance,
Grant that it be decreed,
"To him that hath not" shall be given,
Of the things that he stands in need.

You Will.

PRAY for me, dear! Though skies are blue above me,
I feel I need his ever constant care;
And lips are earnest only when they love me,
So let my name be sometimes in your prayer.

Pray for me,—that his low-voiced tender calling
May win me from a world of anxious cares.
Pray for me,—that "He keep my feet from falling,"
And if it may be, that "He keep my eyes from tears."

The Spirit of Spring.

IT has come! Just stop and listen,
For the sound is low and sweet.
It is where the dewdrops glisten
In the grasses at your feet.

It is where the lily leaning
Would kiss the rose's lips,
Every daisy thrills its meaning
Through the touch of finger tips.

It has come! The breezes bear it
So airily to you,
The rippling waters hear it
And laugh the long night through.

It has come! The birds in chorus
Are singing day and night,
For the springtime blossoms o'er us
In a wealth of pink and white.

My Thorn.

"A THOUSAND times I've thanked Thee
for my roses sweet,"
And for the paths made smooth 'neath tired
feet,
I've thanked Thee, O my God!
I have not thanked Thee for my thorn that
still
Deep in the flesh resists Thy Holy Will,
Nor for the chastening rod.

Some need the thorns and some the flowers;
Some need bright dawns and some sad hours,
And vigils lone.
Show me the rainbow through the rain,
Teach me to glory in the pain
That I have known.

Teach me the value of my thorn,
That of each struggle strength was born
To me.
Show me the glory of my cross, that pain
Of earthly loss was heavenly gain—
A gift from Thee.

A Priceless gift, O Love Divine,
Whose unseen hand is holding mine,
And leading me.
Though I have climbed in pain the way,
I see the breaking of the day—
Dawn of eternity.

Father, I thank Thee. It is best.
Though sorrow's thorns have sorely pressed
And press me still,
'T was by this means I could be won,
And it is good. Thy will be done!
Thy will! Thy will!

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